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THE

2
DRAMA
OF
THE
WITCHES

W.B. Snow.



LONDON: JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, 74 & 75, PICCADILLY.

THE DRAMA ON CRUTCHES.

THE DRAMA

ON

CRUTCHES.

A Satire of the Day.

BY

WM. R. SNOW,

AUTHOR OF "BRITANNIA'S BOX OF SOLDIERS."

LONDON :

(For the Author)

J. C. HOTTEN, 74 & 75, PICCADILLY.

1872.

TO THE
AUDIENCES OF THE PERIOD

These Lines

ARE

PATHETICALLY INSCRIBED.

T H E D R A M A

ON

CRUTCHES.

LET Contemplation all her care bestow,

To scan the Town from Shoreditch to
Soho,

And wonder how (when 'tis so gravely
said

That our poor DRAMA is completely
dead)

Fresh ventures still seize ev'ry vacant
space,

New Theatres, like ill weeds, grow
a-pace,

And, strange anomaly! the self-same Age
Runs up new buildings, and runs down
the Stage.

The DRAMA dead, when mammoth
type belies
The fable of her premature demise ?
Dead ? no ! for see how nude BURLESQUE
can thrive,

And prove by kicking she is all alive !

True, of late years, a most unkindly
Fate

Has frowned upon the old "*Legiti-
mate,*"

And forced the Tragic Muse her grief
to hide

In the dim purlieus of the Surrey side,
And rant in exile. She has had her
day :

Is somewhat *passée* : and she does not
pay.

Poor worn-out beauty ! *she* has little
chance,

Whose limbs are stiff, and skirts too long
to dance ;

Unless her pride in self-defence were
brought

Unworthy popularity to court,—

To fling her poison-cups, in juggler-
fashion,—

Give in a Can - Can her unspoken
passion,—

In pirouettes pourtray her one last
hope,—

Walk in her sleep along the lofty rope,—

Sing her Revenge in idiotic rhyme,—

Swallow her dagger to conceal her
crime,—

And gain a thousand bouquets, endless
praise,

By a great Suicide from the Trapèze !

But on her palmy days the sun has
set :

We turn the gas off : but who feels
regret ?

The Grand Old Tragedy was vastly
fine :

But still *that* Muse is only one of
nine.

For such small loss the Public little
care ;

They pay their money, and they go else-
where.

In polished lines no merits now
appear :

The DRAMA labours not to please the
ear :

In dearth of talent, she must fain
supply

The wherewithal to captivate the eye :

For glitter, legs, and colour, are to-
day

Th' ingredients of the thing we call a
Play.

Mere wealth of thought could please a
former Age,

Though spoken on a meanly furnished
Stage :

But now where is the hardihood that
dares

Furnish the Palace with two Windsor
chairs ?

What wit for gay retainers could
atone,

Clad, each in garb peculiarly his own ?

Or where the reckless hero could you
see

Cheered on to glory by his band of
three ?

No modern bards on sterling verse
presume,

For Sense plays second fiddle to Cos-
tume ;

And Fashion, laying on pure ART no
stress,

Merges all acting in display of dress.

Your modern Pegasus, all out of feather,
Gives up his flights of Fancy altogether,
And stumbles on, poor screw! be-spat-
tered by

The trampled mud of Mediocrity ;

The Poet sinks down to the play-
wright's grade,

(For what was once an Art is now a
trade)

Doomed ev'ry truth of nature to forget,

Twist all events to suit some "*heavy*
set,"

To be of Machinists the pliant tool,
To own the Carpenter's exclusive rule,
Cripple his Thought to meet the
painter's views,
Invoke the Gas-man, and disdain the
Muse!

What though Incompetence your
couplet mangles?
The Stalls are eager to applaud the
spangles.
Lest dreary dialogue provoke complaint,
Dazzle the Critic with display of paint!
If plot be weak, construction all but
nil,

Parade your chairs and tables in the
Bill !

On rep and gilding lavish all your
pains !

And find in wood the substitute for
brains !

If startling incident your Acts re-
quire,

Condone your dulness by a house on
fire !

Your jaded intellect may well ignore
The fact that so and so was done
before.

Old friends are always welcome—known
as true ones—

Whilst there is often doubt about the
new ones—

Your vet'ran jokes are licensed : those
that bear

Tradition's stamp are legal every-
where.

Brush up your shreds and patches !
though the Stage

May damn their value, it respects their
Age.

Show to the Pit, with realistic pride,
Some choice selections from their world
outside !

Drive a *real* Hansom on the scene, and
there

Pay him a *real* bad sixpence for his
fare ;

Make the full House in one loud Bravo
join

For injured Cabby and the spurious
coin !

The greatest Dramatist is he who flings
SENSATION'S halo round the meanest
things.

In lighter Pieces introduce with tact
Your Ballet to conclude the tedious
Act.

For shapely limbs have most seductive
power

To cause oblivion of the last half hour ;
And, thanks to studied minimum of
dress,
The threatened *fiasco* is the GRAND SUCCESS !

But let no failure tempt your purse to
shrink
From free expenditure of Printer's ink !
In daily Papers catch the Public eye !
Re-iterate your ostentatious lie !
For th' easy going worldling of to-day
(Who has not strength of mind to damn
a Play)
Takes his opinions all at second-hand ;

Nor spurs his intellect to understand
How GENUINE TRIUMPHS may be won
by aint

Of advertising in the largest print ;

And grasps, poor easy man ! the prof-
fered chance

Of taking seats a twelvemonth in ad-
vance !

And, at the worst, your hopes may well
forestall

The barren honour of a certain '*call* :

That comfort is your due : although our
Time

Is pregnant with variety of crime,
The Age is so essentially polite

We keep our executions out of sight ;
Disfavour ventures on no outward
scorn,

And so your play is quietly withdrawn.

But such untoward fate can only be

The end of dullest mediocrity.

'Tis not in every mortal to excel :

Cheer up ! your nonsense will go down
as well.

With trash macadamise the road to
Fame !

Effective rubbish serves to win a name ;

And Fortune smiles on such incongruous
stuff,

Provided only it be bad enough :

For *then*, let Critics carp, th' united
Press

Abuse you, till abuse ensures Success !

Who seeks SENSATION ? let the novel's
page

Be the unopened oyster of the STAGE :
Nor think our natives only sure to please ;
But dredge, by night, in continental seas :
Season with British sauce : and few will
tell

Whence came the oyster, if you hide the
shell.

Learn then to slyly pluck with furtive
care

The lurking buds of Genius, here and
there.

For Wisdom reaps where Carelessness
has sown,

And calls the choicest bouquet all *his*
own,

Who had the happy chance at first to
find it,

And feels no outlay but for thread to
bind it.

'Tis yours to gather freely in your sport
The stray ideas in unmown fields of
Thought ;

Blend, happy labour ! with harmonious
skill,

The stolen flow'rets at your own sweet
will ;

Or, from your neighbour's orchard,
shower down

Blossoms to hide your baldness with a
crown !

Whate'er th' ingredients, you will not
be wrong

In serving up your dish both hot and
strong :

Most piquant morsels now our taste can
bear :

The jaded appetite demands such fare.

Enthroned a sin : we'll hold you free from
blame :

Make it attract : *there* lies your moral aim.
But wrap your foulness in a fair outside ;
And silk attire the cloven foot should
hide ;

For Sin, in cotton, is but vulgar Vice :
That points no moral, which does not
entice.

The scene must be all glitter : for we
scout

The thought how soon the gas will be
turned out,

The brightness dimm'd by premature
decay,

The dust, and broken spangles, swept
away.

There's the true picture. But who dare
 proclaim

How false the jewels of attractive
 SHAME ?

For know, this World of ours is not too
 proud

To jostle noted Sirens in the crowd ;
 And schooled by life-long study of the
 nude,

Gives startled Innocence the name of
 Prude ;

Wears Thais' livery ; with Aspasia's
 paint

Bedaubs the sinner, and conceals the
 saint ;

Till maids and matrons, by their dubious
dress,

Assume the lack of virtue they possess.

Learn then the tempting bait such tastes
to suit—

The crowd will nibble your forbidden
fruit—

Such be your sermon: preach on, unper-
plex'd!

And trust the Devil to supply your
text!—

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A Muse on Crutches! 'Tis a sorry
sight

To see the Drama in so sad a plight !
 Drugg'd by the witching spell of fairy
 bowers,
 When tin foil and Dutch metal stand for
 flowers ;
 Where Dulness sneaks behind the mask
 of FUN,
 Or flaunts in lime light's artificial Sun ;
 Where ART lies under an unseemly ban ;
 The show appeals but to the baser man ;
 Where airy nothings pass for full attire,
 And th' only blush reflection of Red
 Fire !
 The ART's in danger. Shall we haste
 to seize,

And rout, each morbid symptom of
disease ?

Or idly leave her in this sorest need

To linger on, the chronic invalid ?

Ignore her tottering ? nor feel despair,

When e'en her Crutches are the worse
for wear ?

SENSATION, who has made the pace too fast,

Succumbs to bankruptcy of brain at last :

BURLESQUE has hunted fairy tales to death,

And danced her former spirit out of
breath.

Those props are failing. Can we make
them strong

By importation of exotic song ?

Cobble their rottenness ? or take advice
From alien Doctors to effect a splice ?

O ye, her Patrons, ye, who can impart
More healthy action to the limping ART
With props and stays all sympathy dis-
claim !

Hi presto ! and the MUSE, no longer lame,
Guiltless of Murder, Bigamy, or Pun,
Throws down her Crutches, and enjoys
a RUN !

THE END.

